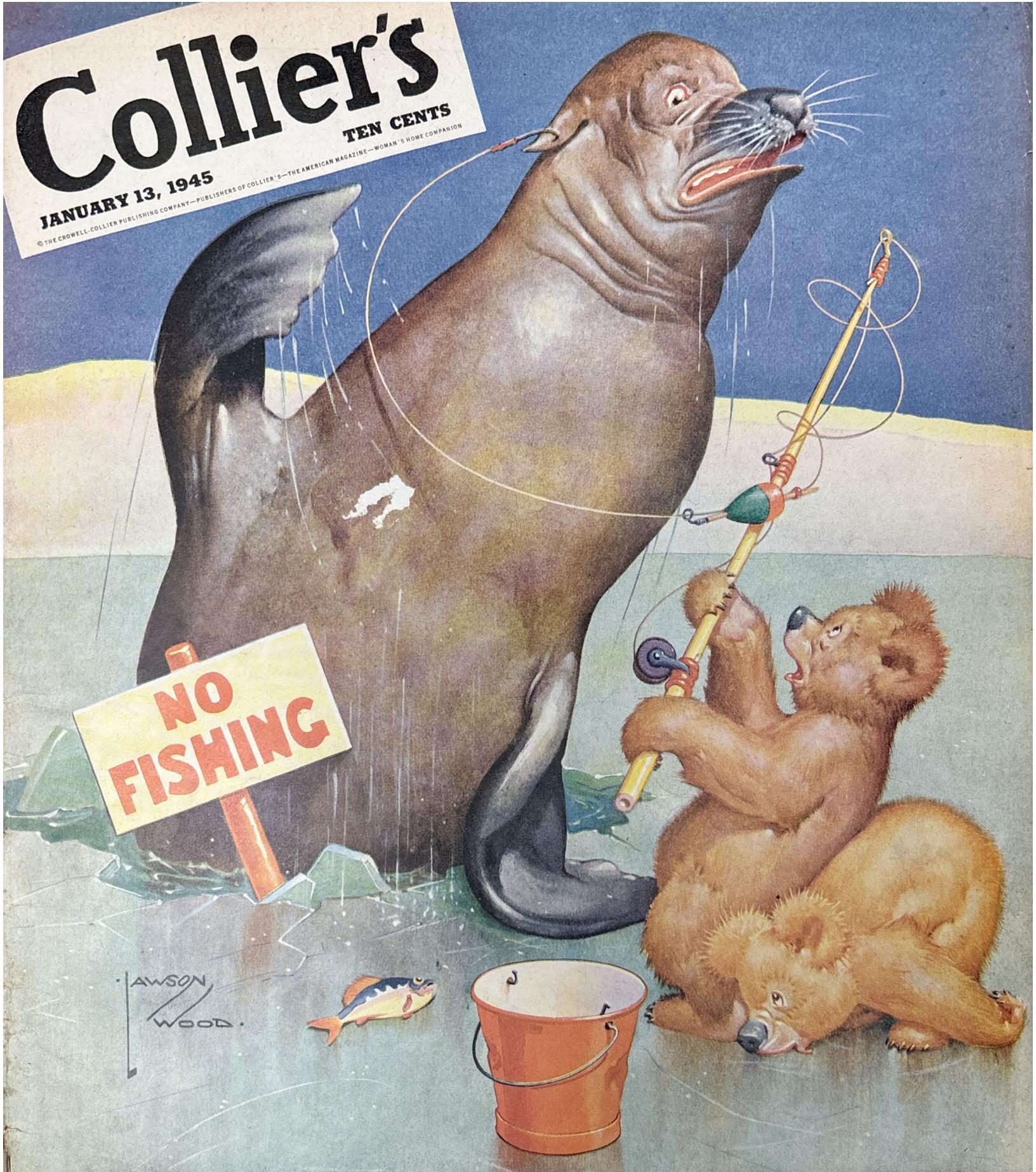


Collier's

TEN CENTS

JANUARY 13, 1945

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AMERICA'S GREATEST NAVAL BATTLE

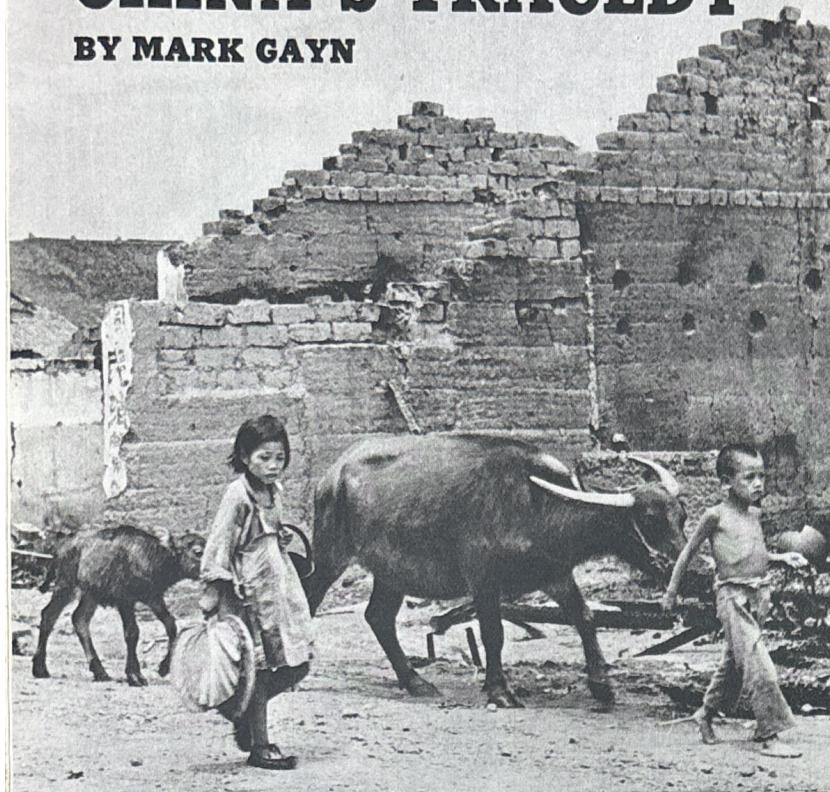
A COMPLETE REPORT ON HOW WE LICKED 'EM

Quentin Reynolds • George E. Jones • Frank D. Morris

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POTTS MOUTH
C 244-471
ALEXANDER HARR
PASSEAVANT C
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The Cause of CHINA'S TRAGEDY

BY MARK GAYN



In some sections of China, food is so scarce that women and children are sold into slavery at so much per pound. Girls bring half as much as pork



In happier days, before his recall at the request of Chiang Kai-shek, Gen. Joseph Stilwell pinned the Legion of Merit on the Chinese leader

The morale of China's people and their regard for the government of Chiang Kai-shek are at their lowest ebb. The nation is cut in two, and the Japanese threaten its very heart. This report tells what caused this disaster and why only democratic reform can save the country

THE zero hour in Free China, the hour of crucial and irrevocable decision, came in December. After years of bloody effort, Japan had hacked a corridor across Asia, split China in two, placed her armies in a position to strike either at China's nerve center in Chungking or the key supply base at Kunming.

In the eighth year of her war, China was forced to the verge of complete military collapse and today she is weakened by disunity, hunger and corruption, by her own warring political cliques and by a strangling blockade. Her armies are battered, underarmed and ill-trained; her reserves are pitifully slim. Only the most drastic measures by China and her allies can prevent a disaster. But these measures must come at once, for China has no more time to spare—and no more space to trade for precious time.

The story of how China steadily drifted to chaos and defeat can be told in many ways. It can begin in 1926, when a young, earnest Chinese general named Chiang Kai-shek, flanked by his Russian advisers, launched his historic drive to sweep China of warlordism. Or it can begin a year later, when Chiang broke with his Red allies, and a wave of terror swept China. Or it can begin in those unbearably hot, tense summer days of 1937 when Japan struck her final blow at China.

Or it can well begin—as this report will—with last April, when a swarm of Japanese "guerrilla" bands, followed by 200 whippet tanks, attacked in the green plain of Honan Province. That April, the Japanese played a canny game. For months their agents, disguised as merchants, had crossed the front lines freely. They scouted the Chinese defenses, talked to the officers and men, carefully felt the people's pulse. They found that the Chinese army in Honan was rotten with graft and inaction, that it lacked equipment, that it was hated by the farmers from whom it had extorted grain in the two preceding years of famine.

When the dossier on Honan was complete, the Japanese struck. At first they used only 40,000 men, split into small, mobile units.

Chinese army medics minister to a wounded soldier. Unfortunately this treatment is not always possible

Facing them was an army of 250,000 under General Tang En-po, who had a fighter's reputation but kept his headquarters far, far behind the front.

When the blow fell, the Honan Command had 700 trucks. Five hundred of them were immediately seized by Chinese officers and officials to move their families, concubines and chattels to safety. Left without transport, the Chinese army promptly took over all carts and oxen it could find.

Oxcarts are the pillar of peasant economy. Angry, the farmers began to resist. Leadership came from the old village secret society, the Red Spears, which for decades has defended the safety of the villages. As the peasant bands grew, they began to attack Chinese army units up to 500 men. The farmers were not for Japan but their slogan was "Better Japan's soldiers than the men of Tang En-po." In all, they probably seized 50,000 rifles.

Meanwhile, the small Japanese units streaked across the young wheat, cutting rail lines, taking towns, disorganizing Chinese defenses. In a few weeks, nothing remained of Tang's army. It had crumbled into nothing, leaving behind an evil memory and the bodies of hapless, ragged soldiers strewn along the country roads.

Honan was Japan's. So was the crop, one of the best in Honan's history.

Poised for the Final Thrust

Now the Japanese rested briefly. Before them, to the south, lay the heart of Free China, with its rich rice fields, teeming cities, American air bases, ragged soldiery, bickering generals, its abject poverty of tenant farmers side by side with the vast and insolent wealth of speculators. A blow here made good military sense. It could establish a land link with Japan's looted empire in south Asia; it could diminish the American successes on the seas and in Burma; conceivably it could knock disunited and exhausted China out of the war.

General Yasuji Okamura was picked to deal the blow. He was more than an able soldier; he was also a member of that brilliant Japanese army clique which made intrigue and subterfuge the elder brothers of the cannon. The pattern of the campaign in Honan was duplicated on a larger scale.

Swarms of well-trained, Chinese fifth columnists filtered into the area. They were armed with tommy guns and hand grenades; they knew the terrain and its people. Behind them came guerrilla-type Japanese units.

Okamura played his hand well. His agents murdered and sabotaged; they spread fearful rumor; skillfully, they played on the tragic disunity of Free China. They tore up the close web of outposts which warned the American air bases of the approaching enemy raiders. The bulk of the Japanese army was still far away, but with the web destroyed, the key American airfield at Hengyang had to be abandoned.

Changsha, Free China's rice bin, was Okamura's first objective. Four times previously



Cracker-Barrel Railroaders

Continued from page 16

all-steel, modernized Maine Central train. Inside its wooden coach, this gaiety reaches thumb-nose proportions. The color scheme would shame the most modern of roads: its walls and ceilings are a yellowish cream, the seats a bright blue plush, and the brown-painted floor is spotlessly clean. In one corner sits an old-fashioned, egg-shaped coal stove, glorified by a coat of aluminum paint and trimmed in black.

It is at Burnham Junction that you first see Conductor Pat Shaw, a jovial, roly-poly man of fifty-odd years who obviously has been railroading all his life. He's the head man of the B. & M.L. passenger and freight crews. He also helps make the Belfast & Moosehead Lake different. He knows nearly all his passengers, touts the heads of small boys, kids with regular customers. No woman gets on the train carrying her bags while Pat's around, and he is a sort of unofficial welcome for Belfast to strangers.

On that cold 5:30 A.M. trip, he's apt to brew a pot of coffee on the coal stove and serve it. He will stop the train to let a mother and her kids off near their house and sometimes, in hunting season, he'll make a special stop to give hunters a lift or let them off at a point where he has seen deer.

Until recently Pat wore a freight brakeman's work cap on both his daily runs. Then a retiring Maine Central conductor gave him a regulation conductor's cap. The B. & M.L. came through with a resplendent brass plate reading: "Conductor, Belfast & Moosehead Lake R.R." Today Pat is strictly "varnish" to his co-workers: he wears his brakeman's cap on the morning freight and his conductor's cap on the passenger train.

Life on the Belfast & Moosehead Lake, Pat says, is never dull because the "country's too wild for it." Once a moose got on the tracks ahead of the train and wouldn't get off. The engineer blew his whistle, made his engine snort and bellow white clouds of steam. All the moose did was break into a lop and run a couple of miles down the track just ahead of the engine. Finally he came to a clearing and stepped out of the way.

The toughest experience Pat remembers was the time seven freight cars were derailed on a bridge near Burnham Junction. Luckily, they all remained upright. Lacking the wrecking equipment the big railroads have, the Belfast & Moosehead Lake solved the problem with the same ingenuity that has made the road a paying proposition.

"What we did was simple," Pat says. "We simply jacked up one car at a time and laid track under it. When we got all the track laid, we put in a switch, and then just switched her back onto the regular track. It took us over twenty-four hours, though, and no one got any sleep."

That was a good many years ago and, with the exception of a wooden bridge washed out in the floods three years ago and since replaced by a steel one, there have been no

other mishaps. In the seventy-five years of its existence, no B. & M.L. passenger has been injured.

This is as good a place as any to tell you about the Belfast & Moosehead Lake's track. It is gradually being replaced by heavier track, but most of it was laid three quarters of a century ago, and in those days they made the end of each rail fall exactly opposite the end of the parallel rail. In modern track-laying there is a never-never rule against this because a heavy train might spread the tracks, and rails are always laid so that the end of one falls in the middle of the opposite rail. The B. & M.L. has had no derailments due to its ancient track-laying. But each section of track is either higher or lower than the preceding section. Therefore, the train doesn't go "clickety-clap," but "clops" along with a bounce which, at high speeds, is akin to riding a bucking bronco.

The railroad started out from Belfast seventy-five years ago for Moosehead Lake, nearly a hundred miles inland, to get the inside track on that region's potato and lumber business. Although the city sank \$850,000 into its construction, the road ran out of funds when it was still some seventy miles short of its goal. Finally, after considerable finagling, a junction was effected with the Maine Central at Burnham, and Belfast decided to let it go at that. Happily for Belfast, the Maine Central then leased the entire line for fifty years at an annual rental of \$36,000, and supplied all the locomotives and rolling stock. So Belfast was in clover. The annual \$36,000 was applied to taxes and eased the taxpayers' load slightly. In the years between 1871 and 1926, the city received close to \$1,500,000.

A Threat to Local Ownership

The only real squabble came in 1915 when the fighting editor of the Waldo County Herald smelled out something that looked like a scheme among the directors to sell the road to the Maine Central. In a "no holds barred" editorial, he called for "immediate action to prevent another Opera House deal on a large scale . . ." The move to sell the road was beaten off and the Opera House deal (whatever it was) has long been forgotten.

Then on July 1, 1925, the Maine Central gave Belfast six months notice that it was discontinuing service beginning Jan. 1, 1926. Because it had operated the line on a lease, there was no case for a protest to the state public service commission. The Maine Central was losing \$40,000 a year operating the line and wasn't going to continue. For Belfast, it was either operate the road successfully or disappear. All that remained of the city's once prosperous shipping and shipbuilding industry were the beautiful old houses, with their cupolas giving a view of the harbor, which had been built by the schooner captains.

Things were pretty gloomy. The city was without any railroad equipment, not even a lantern. All it had was a corporation, the Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad, thirty-three miles of track, and four stations. But the directors made up their minds that the railroad had to be operated—and successfully. The first thing done was to hire a man named H. P. Crowell, who is now an adviser to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation on railroads. Crowell, rising from a lowly station agent's job, had converted another nearly bankrupt short line, the St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain, into a going concern. With Crowell as general superintendent, the directors borrowed \$5,000 from a local wood-working manufacturer, Orlando Frost, and rented three old freight engines and passenger cars from the Maine Central. Pat Shaw, who happened to be in town to bid his mother goodby before setting off for South America, was hired as a conductor, and the Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad was in business for itself.

At the end of the first month it was ahead \$140, at the end of a year \$1,450. The next year it lost \$9,305. In 1928 it made \$5,379. This nip-and-tuck period ended in 1929 as a result of a struggle to get the Maine Central to make some adjustment in divvying up freight rates. That year they made \$24,063. Since then, excepting 1931, '33, '34, '36, it has more than made up for those losses.

Today the road is breaking all its financial success records. In 1943, freight, of which 47 per cent either originates or terminates in Belfast, brought in \$79,000, passengers \$10,000, mail \$14,000, express \$4,700, and milk \$5,000. For the first eight months of 1944, freight revenues increased \$8,002 over the same period in the previous year.

The battle was won with three freight engines, all over fifty years old. Their parts have been replaced so frequently that in the roundhouse the road is called "The Broken and Mended." Then there are two mail cars, two flatcars, a caboose and a snowplow. Last but most spectacular is "Motor 90," a secondhand car equipped with flanged wheels. Its name stems from the fact that it cost \$90. It was purchased and named after the victory had been won.

All the B. & M.L.'s directors—local businessmen elected by the city council directors—serve without being paid, unless you could call \$100 a year for the treasurer and \$25 a year for the secretary pay. They serve out of public spirit, knowing that without the B. & M.L., Waldo County's lumber industry, fish canneries and potato farms would dwindle and possibly die.

Their last big argument was over whether they should convert the rear end of one of the old coaches into something like a club car as a special treat for Belfast's summer visitors. The converts won, and today one of the coaches has six upholstered maple easy chairs in a rear compartment. The renovation cost almost as much as the original coach, but it is one of the sights of Belfast. And, after all, a railroad has got to keep pace with modern design.

THE END

The Cause of China's Tragedy

Continued from page 19

one day, misery will shatter the dam of fear. If at that time it acquires a tough, competent, farsighted leadership, armed with catchy slogans, it will form one of the most destructive social tidal waves in China's history.

From rural distress, turn to the field of foreign affairs. American observers charge in unison that the Chinese government has gradually estranged its three great allies. Some of Chungking's actions and statements stem from a healthy nationalism. But most can probably be traced to the strong antiforeign feeling shrouding official Chungking.

Typical of this spirit were the secret regulations issued last year by the National Military Council in Chungking. Intended to

govern the contacts of Chinese with foreigners, the regulations said: "People in charge of guiding foreign visitors must prevent them, as much as possible, from meeting and talking with foreigners already residing at those points."

With a fine sense of what constituted news, a Chengtu daily printed the item, after clearing it with an unwary censor. General Chang Chun, governor of Szechuan and Chiang Kai-shek's intimate, at once angrily ordered a court-martial. The censor received five years' imprisonment. The guilty editor and reporter were ordered fired and blacklisted, so that they could work on no other newspaper in China.

Persistently, Britain has been accused by the Chinese of not fighting the war, of hindering China's war-making, of holding that which should be China's—including portions of Burma. Even more open and vigorous have been the attacks on Russia. It took the combined influence of Henry Wallace and Donald Nelson to convince Chungking that

the United States will neither fight Russia nor back the Kuomintang in a civil war on the Chinese Reds.

American pressure has curbed the anti-Russian campaign. It has also led to the removal of the trouble-making, anti-Soviet governor of Chinese Turkestan. But it has not prevented the government-controlled press from perceptibly, if shrewdly, playing down news of Russian victories.

But even the United States, China's warmest and most disinterested friend, has not escaped without bruises. These have been caused by selfish haggling in Chungking, by official corruption, by endless obstructions. The withdrawal of General Stilwell and Ambassador Clarence Gauss was, in a way, a measure of the deep and bitter frustration felt by the Americans working in and for China. No Americans have tasted more of bitterness than the officers and men desperately trying to whip the Chinese military effort into shape.

One of China's major contributions to the



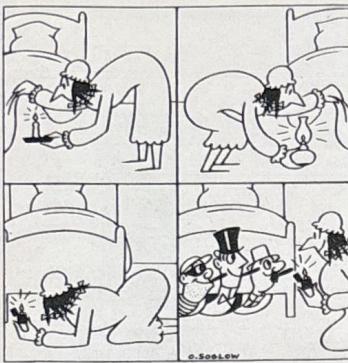
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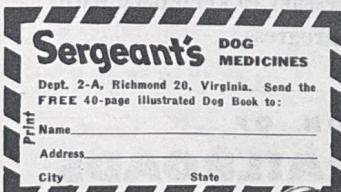
Of course, I'm embarrassed

I don't like to talk about worms, Boss. But I thought you ought to know. Worms are bad—they sap a dog's strength, leave him too weak to fight serious illness.

Clean out those thieves, Boss, with Sergeant's SURE SHOT Capsules (Puppy Capsules for young dogs). They're easy to take, and how they work! In no time at all, I'll be my old self again.

After worming, I'll need Sergeant's Vitamin Capsules (Vitapets) to help me get back in shape.

Get both at drug or pet store and keep them on hand. Get Sergeant's Dog Book, too—free at stores or with this coupon.



Thanks, Boss, you're a great guy—Snuffy

Allied war effort has been to allow the Americans to build and use air bases. But Chungking took no steps to protect the Americans from vicious and wholesale profiteering. This is a typical instance:

A Chinese concern which undertook to build an air base in south China sublet the contract. The subcontractor in turn sublet it. By the time the contract had filtered down to the fourth subcontractor, the margin of legitimate profit had been almost eliminated. The subcontractor solved the problem simply by cutting the pay of the thousands of men, women and children corralled to build the base, explaining to them the Americans did not want to pay more. Naturally, American prestige in this area sank to an all-time low.

As it earlier failed to make effective use of Russian equipment, the Chinese command now misused such American equipment as they received. This was partly the fault of the poor training of the soldiers and partly the ineptness of generals. But also heavily involved in it was Chungking's anxiety to arm itself for the expected domestic disputes.

Equipment flown into China at such fantastic cost has often been hoarded by the Chinese far behind the front. Authenticated instances, now in the possession of the editors of Collier's, cannot be published only because they would give valuable information to the enemy.

Competent Americans further report instances of China's refusal to permit U.S. forces to use American matériel, consigned to China but deteriorating in India for lack of transportation.

In China's own war effort, the picture has been even darker. In the eighth year of the war, China still has no service of supply, no truly unified command, no modern system of training reserves, no adequate medical corps. An utterly corrupt conscription system fills the army with the least fit, for the ablest and the strongest can either buy their way out or desert. Throughout China, exemption has a market quotation, ranging from \$4,000 to \$50,000, Chinese—perhaps \$7 to \$80 in American money. Once the recruits are in the army, they are starved and maltreated to a degree unimaginable anywhere else in the world. One observer in China estimates that only one recruit in twenty reaches the front.

In the wave of reform which followed General Stilwell's recall, the Chinese set up a Ministry of Conscription and promised other changes, long urged by "Vinegar Joe." The most important of these was the reduction of the armies to a size which could be commanded, trained, equipped and fed adequately.

These reforms would do much good, but the Americans in China are not too sanguine. The universal draft requires a degree of central control and efficiency which Chungking does not possess. Too, armies in China are political instruments, and the semi-independent war lords will fiercely oppose any attempt to reduce their forces.

An Impenetrable Economic Web

But it is in the field of economics that things are blackest. Even before the soldiers go into battle, their striking power is sapped by inflation, by hoarding and unbridled speculation, by an antiquated and rapacious tax system, by crippled transportation and unashamed trading with the enemy. Most of these problems are interlocked. They must not be tackled halfheartedly or piecemeal. Yet one of the chief criticisms against Chungking is that it has done precisely that.

Take inflation: Last month the prices were 450 times those of 1936. The month the exchange value of one American dollar had gone up from \$3.50 to \$600, and may yet climb to \$800. Knowing that the Chinese dollar is barely worth the American paper on which it is printed, the speculators refuse to hold on to it. Industrial investment is not sufficiently attractive. Therefore, the speculators turn to greener pastures.

In huge chunks, land is falling into the hands of city speculators. In China this development is political dynamite, compared to which our own "Okie" problem is a penny firecracker. Speculators who do not buy land

hoard raw materials. Meanwhile, the industries languish for lack of capital. (Chiang Kai-shek, it is said, looked startled when Donald Nelson told him China's industrial plant was running at only 30 per cent to 70 per cent of its meager capacity.)

Chungking's ventures into wartime contracts have thus far been ill-advised and poorly executed. Typical, perhaps, has been Chungking's attempt to control the price of salt in Fukien. So high was the price set in this rich salt-producing area that the man in the street could not afford it. Now salt is bootlegged on such a scale that special troops have to be posted to compel the salt makers to turn their product over to the government at the prescribed prices—and to keep a nightly vigil for thieves.

Case of Haves and Have-Not

Rationing, when it had been tried, proved inefficient. That has also been true of the mobilization of resources—though Mr. Nelson may now have better luck with it. Almost nothing has been done to control the manufacture of and trade in luxury goods. No effective effort has been made to reduce the budgetary deficit or to boost revenues by taxing excess profits. China's poor are starving; China's rich are obscenely rich. (Typical



is the case of a speculator who ordered a piano smuggled from Canton, across two battle lines—and got it.)

China's tax machinery has bogged down in corruption and inefficiency. An American expert estimates that possibly only a third of the revenues collected reaches the government. Yet the number and variety of taxes defy imagination. Taxes have been imposed on funerals, on weddings and on family-raising, on prostitution, gambling and monasteries, on religious feasts and pig slaughter, on the remarriage of widows and the sale of dried mushrooms.

In a town in southeast China an American, hungry for beef, discovered there was none on the market because of a prohibitive tax imposed on freshly quartered meat by the local branch of the Kuomintang. The official explanation for the tax: "To prevent tainted beef from reaching the customer."

In a Fukien hamlet, another American met a soldier loudly proclaiming a "new government tax on freshly cut lumber." In sight of the American, the soldier collected the "tax" on two loads of timber from protesting owners. The American is still uncertain whether the "tax" went to the ingenious soldier himself, or to his officer.

Not all the blame rests on Chungking's shoulders. The most vicious imposts are decreed by the local war lords and officials, but Chungking's taxes, too, are high and tragically inequitable. Together with prohibitive taxes marches usury. A Chungking bank solicits idle funds, repaying the investors 30 per cent a month. In southeast China, peanut-oil traders, needing cash at peanut harvest time, pay \$1.60 for a dollar borrowed two months previously. A dollar trebling itself within a year excites no comment.

But the most malodorous scandal of wartime China concerns her trading with the enemy. This trade, computed in billions of Chinese dollars, flows freely across the front lines. It benefits the Japanese, causes famine in key areas, saps Free China's industrial strength, demoralizes her armies. It is open knowledge that many Chinese semiofficial

organs, a flock of Chungking dignitaries and numerous generals are involved in the traffic.

Chungking informally divides the trade with the enemy into "legitimate" and "illegitimate." The former includes the imports of essential items: Nippon-made cloth, thread, medicines. Some of these imports are handled by huge semiofficial trading and shipping firms, and by smaller merchants asked to do so by the government.

"Legitimate" imports go through Chinese customs stations and pay duty to China. Frequently, the "legitimate" importers are organized in smugglers' guilds and they do not hesitate to bring their grievances to official attention.

Most of the imports, however, filter through the Chinese lines. This, of necessity, required the connivance of the military, from the lowly *lao ping*—China's G.I. Joe—to his general. Each collects his cut, each in the process violates army regulations.

The poison of mercantilism spreads wide and deep. It creates groups interested in "normalcy" at the front. A high Allied officer told me of a talk he had with the governor of a province in which he intended to set up a base.

The governor protested sharply: "No, I cannot allow you to do it. Now everything is peaceful, the people are working, and what we lack we can buy from the Japanese dwarfs. If you set up your base here, the first thing you know, the Japanese airplanes will come and bomb us to bits."

A good case, certainly, could be built for the "legitimate" smuggling—if it could be funneled through a few rigidly controlled points; if it included only the items which Free China really needs; if nothing important were given to the enemy in return. But unfortunately an alarming ratio of the smuggled goods includes luxury items: lipsticks and cigarettes, talcum powder and table delicacies, gadgets for the home and exquisite silks.

In return, China pays Japan with things she cannot afford to give up: rice, tin and wolfram, cotton and tung oil, timber, paper, and alum, tobacco and wheat, quicksilver and copper. (A single port in Indo-China handles 100 tons of Chinese copper a month. Raw cotton exported to Japanese-held China is spun into cloth and thread by Japanese mills, and then smuggled back into Free China, with the enemy collecting on both transactions. In some areas in southern China, tobacco and opium are being grown specially for export into the Japanese-held territory.)

Starving—to Feed the Enemy

Even worse is the traffic in rice. Free China goes hungry while rice by the thousands of tons flows into Japanese hands. The trade flourishes wherever rice is grown, and it fills the enemy bins in Hankow, Shanghai and Canton. This rice is not surplus. Every grain of it is needed to feed Free China. Yet little is done to check the traffic, and great fortunes are piled up by the traders.

The result is inevitable. Famine stalks vast areas, people eat clay and grass, and die, and those who survive would be better off dead. In such areas, rice is sold by the grain: 250 grains for \$1, Chinese. In other areas, men unable to feed their families sell them into slavery by the catty (1 1/4 pounds): \$8, Chinese (the price of a Coke in your corner drugstore) a catty for boys, \$6 a catty for girls, \$4 a catty for infants. Pork is quoted at \$14 a catty. Recent reports show women and children are being shipped inland from the coast for sale.

Last summer an American observer estimated that a third of Kwangtung's 36,000,000 population were facing famine. Later, a missionary who had traveled across south China predicted widespread hunger this winter. He listed three main causes: drought, destruction by the Japanese, sale of rice to the enemy.

The richest rice-producing areas fell to Japan last summer. The Japanese, no doubt, will continue to tempt traders to smuggle what little rice there is out of shrunken Free China. Does the Central Government, as constituted at the time this article is written, hold up any promise of military, political and economic reform?



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This must be explained at the outset: The Central Government is not a democratic government, nor does it claim to be one. All its important posts are held by members of a single party, the Kuomintang; it declines to introduce wide democratic reforms until a year after the war.

This monopoly of political power is one of the main complaints hurled at Chungking. The critics point out that the 2,000,000 members of the Kuomintang hold almost every key political job in Free China. They point out that all officials—and professors—are required to take Kuomintang political training and obey the party leaders. They complain that the Kuomintang has developed an omnipotent secret service and filled huge concentration camps with political suspects.

This indictment is severe. Almost all of it is true. But it errs in blanketing the entire Kuomintang. Actually the Kuomintang is united no more than our political parties. It has its own progressives and reactionaries, its willful men and reformers, its bosses and cliques.

Democrats Without a Party

It has, for instance, Sun Fo, the chubby, 53-year-old son of China's revolutionary saint, Sun Yat-sen. Sun Fo shows a strong concern for the common man, an outspoken interest in social reform, a firm belief in the world's oneness. However, he has no effective backing. No more has the Kuomintang's T. V. Soong, who last month was appointed Acting Premier (he is also Foreign Minister). A brother of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, he is as Western, up-to-date and honest as any banker in a fair-sized Middle Western town.

The Kuomintang has such men as the French-trained geologist Wong Wen-hao (now helping Donald Nelson to set up a Chinese War Production Board), and the able and moderate lawyer Wang Shih-chieh, educated in London and Paris. Both Wong and Wang hold cabinet jobs, both are friends of the United States, both are progressive.

But the Kuomintang also has its vast and dark region of obdurate reaction. It is in this area that one finds the enemies of reform, the foes of China's Communists.

Here stands the 56-year-old General Ho Ying-chin, a foe of Stilwell, a confidant of Chiang Kai-shek and for fourteen years the Minister of War. Until he was ousted a few weeks ago, Americans in Chungking regarded him as the chief obstacle to army reorganization. Here, too, is Major General Tai Li, the sharp-faced, sharp-witted ruthless chief of the secret service whose 40,000 agents do a thorough job of hunting down liberals, Reds and dissidents.

Here, finally, are the famous two Chen brothers—the tough and able masterminds of reaction in Chungking. Close friends of Chiang Kai-shek for two decades, the Chens wield their great power through the Kuomintang party machinery, whose every function—from patronage to the secret service—they control. They are the party bosses to whom democratic reform is anathema, the men whose ideal is the paternalistic, disciplined rural China of Confucian days.

Atop the Kuomintang, with its turbulence, and intrigue, its secret services and its voices desperately crying for reform, sits the most important and the most enigmatic figure of all—Chiang Kai-shek.

Now fifty-seven, Chiang has grown weary. National and domestic difficulties weigh heavily on him. He flies into rages. He canes a soldier who has roped three recruits; he beats officers who have maltreated their men; he hurls teacups at brother-in-law T. V. Soong in an angry argument.

His mind is still razor-sharp, and his political hand agile, but he has found the crisis engulfing China a heavy strain on his resources. He has sought escape by trying to put himself above the indecent scramble for power, but even that has been difficult.

Constantly under pressure endured by no other Allied leader, he has made errors of judgment. Possibly one of them was the famous tea party he gave in Chungking some months ago to a group of government leaders and a handful of foreigners.

After the refreshments had been served, Chiang rose. He and Madame Chiang, he

said, had been aware of malicious rumors regarding his family life and his neglect of official duties. Specifically he denied the report that he had taken a 16-year-old concubine.

He admitted that he had been spending little time at his office. This, he explained, was caused by the acute pain in his back, injured in 1936 in an attempt to escape his kidnappers in Sian. He had been unable to sit still for more than a couple of hours, but he continued to maintain a strenuous working schedule.

He was, Chiang said, a good Christian, a loyal husband, and a faithful servant of his country. The few correspondents present were forbidden to report the incident, but the stunned and embarrassed listeners did not keep their secret well. Madame Chiang soon left for Brazil and New York, where last month she was still receiving medical attention.

Chiang has been adamantly anti-Communist. As late as last August, when the Japanese were already deep in south China, he continued to focus his attention on the Communist problem. He blamed the Communists for the reports of internal unrest and accused American military personnel of encouraging Communist intransigence.

He rejected Ambassador Gauss' shrewd suggestion for a limited war council, embracing representatives of other parties. Gauss argued that a share in responsibility would sober up the critics of the government.

Until the overpowering demands of China's crisis forced a reluctant change, Chiang held fast to his old conception of China as a big, happy family, adhering to the old virtues and philosophy, being ruled by one party, and paying fealty to the family's head. This picture of political bliss was suggested in a book, China's Destiny, published under Chiang's name in 1943, which demonstrated a definite antiforeign, antidemocratic, anti-American tone. Despite a ban on exportation, some copies have been smuggled out to the U. S.

But whatever Chiang's views, he still remains the only man around whom the nation's war effort can be centered. More than ever he is the symbol of China's resistance and courage, for whom neither the Communists nor any other faction can offer a substitute. With all his limitations, he is still a great leader.

Our Bargain with Chiang

Chiang's government, to survive, must depend heavily on American aid. In September, Donald Nelson told Chiang that such aid would be given and that the American government was anxious to see China emerge as Asia's dominant power—headed by Chiang. But he also made it plain that no assistance could be granted unless Chiang embarked on extensive house cleaning and political reform.

In the end, Chiang accepted the proposals of Nelson and General Patrick Hurley, but he traded his consent for the recall of forthright and unbending Vinegar Joe Stilwell. Out with Stilwell went Gauss, who had taken so much undeserved abuse from the ill-informed ever since he moved into the Chungking embassy.

After the departure of Stilwell and Gauss, Chungking announced many reforms. Some were puny, some important, such as General Chen Cheng's appointment as War Minister. Chen has worked closely with Stilwell, and has been China's leading advocate of army reorganization.

But more important than any appointments were the moves toward a compromise with the Communists, the use of the blockade garrisons to fight Japan, and the slow, halting steps toward industrial reorganization.

It would be idle to say now that the steps taken thus far assure a revitalized, united China. The men who have fought democratic reform so bitterly for so long are still in control of the government and the party. The army command has not been unified, and the foes of army reorganization still wield great power. The only hope is that Chiang Kai-shek will realize the gravity of the crisis, the desperate need for drastic action. The hour of decision is here.

THE END



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